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Coyote Valley Specific Plan: Creating a New Town Based on Smart Planning Principles

By Salifu Yakubu

Background

Coyote Valley is situated 12 miles south of downtown San Jose and is envisioned as the next generation of integrated living and working environments in Silicon Valley. The Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) area consists of 7,000 acres of mostly undeveloped land in the southern reaches of the City of San Jose. It is generally bounded by Tulare Hill, Highway 101/ east foothills, the City of Morgan Hill, and the hills to the west. It is divided into three sub-areas: the North Campus Industrial area (1,400 acres), the Urban Reserve (2,000 acres), and the Greenbelt to the south (3,600 acres).

The magnitude of the CVSP is far greater than any specific plan completed to date in San Jose.

San Jose made smart growth decisions for Coyote Valley more than two decades ago by designating the three sub areas and

requiring balanced development that would benefit San Jose and the region. Recognizing the Valley's relative isolation from the rest of San Jose, the City's General Plan directs future development to be in the form of a "balanced, independent community with jobs, housing, retail and community facilities, schools, parks, other community services, infrastructure and public transit—in effect a new town."

Ground Rules for Developing the Coyote Valley Specific Plan

In August 2002, the City Council initiated the Specific Plan process, appointed a 20-member Task Force, and adopted a vision statement with 15 expected outcomes as the guiding principles for Coyote Valley. The Task Force meets once a month and includes elected officials, property owners, environmental advocates and other stakeholders.

Assisting the Task Force in this planning effort are staff from the City's Planning Department, and a professional team of award-winning

consultants headed by the Dahlin Group and KenKay Associates. Other members of this stellar team include Economic and Planning Systems, HMM Engineers, David J. Powers & Associates, Wetlands Research Associates, Schaaf & Wheeler, ENGEO, Hexagon, Basin Research, Lowney Associates, SAGE, and Apex Strategies.

The vision statement directs minimum development capacities of 50,000 jobs and 25,000 dwelling units with 20% affordable housing. It also seeks to create a highly livable, pedestrian and transit friendly community with a variety of housing types, schools, parklands, trails, bicycle paths, transit, commercial centers, job centers, and other community services. Given this vision, preliminary planning analysis indicates that the new Coyote community could have a population density of 21 persons/acre. While this density is higher than the City's existing Urban Service Area average of 10, it is lower than the averages of downtown Vancouver (300 persons/acre), Manhattan (144 persons/acre), New York City (52 persons/acre), and San Francisco (26 persons/acre).

Since the inception of this planning effort, the CVSP staff and consultants have had several meetings with the Greenbelt property owners to explain the process and vision statement, which directs that the Greenbelt must remain a non-urban buffer between the Cities of San Jose and Morgan Hill.

Staff has encountered concerns from the Greenbelt property owners who feel excluded from the process, as their lands are not being planned for urban development. Their experiences indicate that agriculture is no longer viable, and they have continued to request urban development. With a few exceptions, the Greenbelt properties are unincorporated where they are planned and zoned for Agriculture, requiring 20-acre minimum parcel sizes.

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Coyote Valley...*(continued from page 1)*

What makes the Coyote Valley Specific Plan Special?

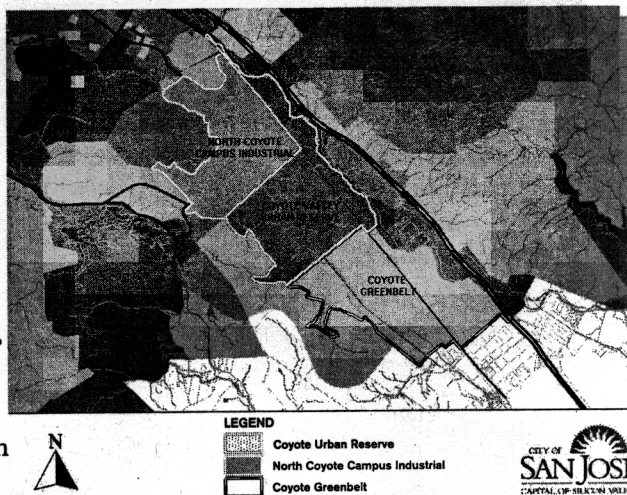
The magnitude of the CVSP is far greater than any specific plan completed to date in San Jose. It is an exciting opportunity to design and facilitate the creation of a new community that is sensitive to its environment, integrates land uses and all modes of transportation, provides affordable housing, and meets other objectives embodied in the City's General Plan. It is a comprehensive planning effort that involves the preparation of a specific plan with detailed land uses, transportation, public facilities, and infrastructure systems. Associated elements include a development phasing plan, implementation measures, market analyses, fiscal impact study, design guidelines, zoning districts, and an Environmental Impact Report.

While there are other large-scale, mixed use, master planned communities throughout the United States, they consist of primarily lower density housing types and work places over larger areas than Coyote Valley. Prominent master planned communities include Irvine Ranch CA (43 square miles), Stapleton CO (4,700 acres), and Celebration FL (4,900 acres). Playa Vista CA on the west side of Los Angeles is an example of a newly planned community that is expected to have 13,000 homes and 21,000 jobs on 1,087 acres—a development intensity similar to what is envisioned in Coyote Valley.

Community Participation and Outreach

Community participation has been key to this process since its inception. In keeping with the City's long-standing practice of involving the community in its planning efforts, and given this project's scale, complexity, and civic and regional significance, the Task Force considered an extensive outreach plan early on in the process.

Since the first Task Force meeting in September 2002, the CVSP process has proceeded with extensive community outreach and discussions with several governmental and non-profit agencies, and other stakeholders. To



date, the Task Force has met 21 times including six community workshops, of which four Saturday workshops occurred this year. These weekend workshops have drawn an average attendance of over 140 attendees, with the monthly Task Force meetings averaging approximately 50.

A Technical Advisory Committee meets monthly, as does various technical sub-committees and staff from City Departments.

Staff has also made periodic presentations to staff of key City Departments and public agencies including the Department of Public Works, Valley Transportation Authority, Santa Clara Valley Water District, County Parks and Recreation, and County Environmental Resources Agency. City and County Commissions that have also been provided with progress reports at key stages of the process include the City's Planning, Housing, and Parks Commissions, as well as the County's

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Professional Development

AICP Exam Workshops

Exam preparation workshops for the November 2004 AICP Exam are scheduled on the following Sundays:

- October 3rd
- October 24th
- November 7th

Please call Dr. Don-Bradley @ 650-592-0915 for times, directions, guest speakers, and more info.

PLANNING IN THE NEWS

- from Planitizen.com

Model Lighting Ordinance Released For Comment

The International Dark-Sky Association has released its draft Model Lighting Ordinance for public comment.

The IDA is a 10,000-member organization that is working to stop the "adverse environmental impact on dark skies" from light pollution. Eleven states and more than one hundred municipa-

lities have adopted light pollution ordinances. IDA's Model Lighting Ordinance is now being made available for public review.

See <http://www.darksky.org/ordsregs/positionlo.html> for more information on the proposed model ordinance.

Who Should Pay For Citywide Wi-Fi?

Wireless networking is becoming an increasingly popular amenity for cities and town. But who will pay for it?

"The wrinkle in the public-service spin on Wi-Fi is who will bear the cost for the service. The answer splits proponents into two camps, and both are problematic. On one side are those who see wireless broadband as a public amenity—a basic service that cities and towns should provide free to residents as they do, say, trash pickup. Missing from this scenario is consensus on how municipalities, perennially short on funds, will pay the Wi-Fi tab."

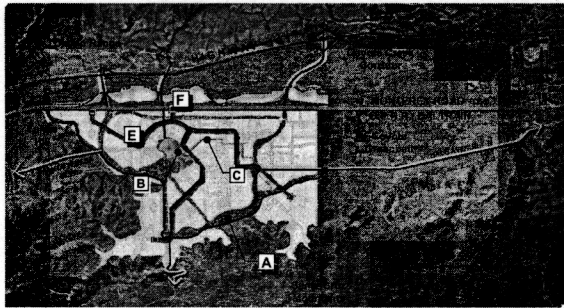
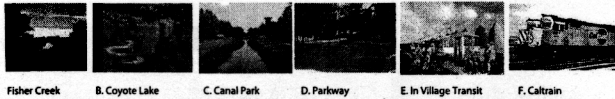
See http://www.technologyreview.com/articles/04/09/wo_asbrand092104.asp?trk=nl
Source: *Technology Review*, Sep 22, 2004.

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Planning, and Parks and Recreation Commissions.

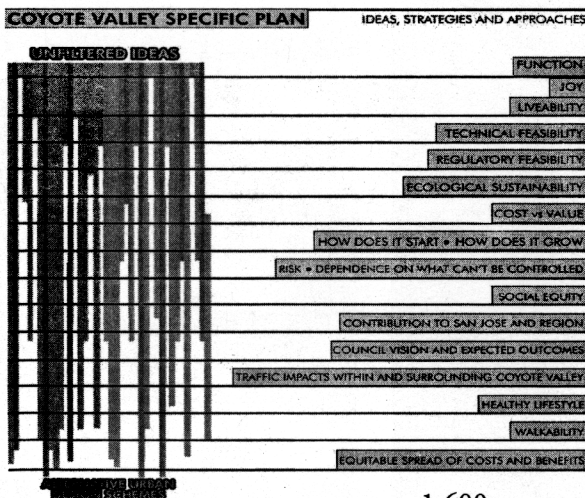
The CVSP process is also supported by a frequently updated website at www.sanjoseca.gov/coyotevalley/. The website is a critical outreach tool as it allows 24-hours-a-day, real time access

Composite Infrastructure Framework



to announcements of upcoming CVSP events, as well as all agendas, reports, presentations, and publications that have previously been discussed at Task Force meetings and community workshops. It has also enabled people from far and wide to transmit their input or inquiries to staff on the CVSP via email.

Task Force meetings and community workshops are open to the public and are professionally facilitated by Eileen Goodwin of Apex Strategies. While most participants to these meetings have typically come from the San Jose metropolitan area, we have had participation from other counties, including Alameda, Contra Costa and San Benito.



The degree of outreach and public participation involved in the CVSP process is unprecedented for any previous planning effort in San Jose. Community meetings are routinely advertised in community newspapers and post card mailings. The CVSP process has had television, radio, and newspaper coverage. Three community newsletters have been sent to a 1,600-person database to keep the public apprised of critical stages of the planning process. A fourth newsletter is in preparation and will be distributed by the middle of this month.

A New Approach to the Specific Plan Process

Because of the potential sensitivity of several environmental resources in Coyote Valley, and the City's desire to create a model community

based on innovative planning and design, the Task Force and CVSP planning team embarked on a new approach for preparing this specific plan. The approach involved a shift from a land planning driven process to one that evolves from the existing natural environment or Environmental Footprint. This new approach led to a multi-phased planning process comprising Technical Analysis, Foundation Infrastructure and Land Use Concepts, Development of the CVSP and EIR, and Recommendation and Approval (see Process Diagram).

a. Technical Analysis (7/03–12/03): The first phase consisted of the completion of background information regarding existing conditions, constraints, and opportunities within the Valley. It involved compiling existing data, collecting new data as needed, and documenting and mapping the information for use in subsequent phases of the project. The technical areas covered in this phase included land use, biology, hydrology, geology, hazardous materials, traffic, civil engineering, and archeology/historic resources. These analyses and data provide the background information for subsequent phases of the CVSP, as well as the existing setting sections of the CVSP Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

b. Foundational Infrastructure and Land Use Concepts (01/04–09/04): This phase consists of developing a preliminary land planning and urban design framework, formulating the building blocks of the new Coyote community, and creating conceptual alternatives of potential infrastructure systems. The conceptual alternatives are analyzed against several criteria (see Filtering Criteria) such as technical, economic, regulatory feasibility, etc. by the CVSP consultants, City staff, and public agencies such as the Valley Transportation Authority.

These analyses culminated in a draft Composite Framework of potential infrastructure elements. While recognizing its preliminary nature and the absence of precise information on such items as the cost, the Task Force accepted the draft

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Composite Framework as a skeletal foundation for the draft land use plan, both subject to further refinement and change.

- The Composite Framework (see attachment) includes the following four potential elements:
- A focal lake, providing flood storage somewhere near the intersection of Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard, is envisioned as a future community core and catalyst for starting development in Coyote Valley.
- A spoke configured transit system offers Coyote Valley the most coverage and flexibility for future growth. In the near term, it is envisioned that the transit could circulate on a fixed guide-way with fun custom-designed rubber-tired "Bus Rapid Transit" vehicles.
- The restoration of Fisher Creek involves its reconstruction to the original location along the hillsides to the west of the CVSP area, as evidenced in a Thompson and West map dated 1876. Relocation could provide for additional flood conveyance required for urban development.
- A multi-function parkway system with merges and loops handles high volume of traffic instead of traditional streets. The parkway could be landscaped and contain bio-filtration swales.
- c. Development of CVSP and EIR (10/04-9/05): This phase will identify the locations and intensities of land uses, determine infrastructure and community service needs, formulate financing and implementation programs, and evaluate the phasing of the plan elements, as may be necessary. Proposed Zoning Districts and Design Guidelines will also be prepared in an effort to provide clear direction for future development. Greenbelt strategies would be developed in this phase, as will an

Environmental Impact Report

In the next several months, the CVSP staff and consultants will be working with the Task Force, and at community workshops, to develop conceptual land use plans based on the draft Composite Framework. This Composite Land Use Plan, together with the Composite Framework, would form the basis for the CVSP and associated elements and documents.

- d. Recommendation and Consideration (9/05-12/05): In this phase the CVSP package, including the specific plan, design guidelines and zoning districts, and EIR would be presented at hearings before various Commissions prior to City Council consideration. The entire package is expected to be submitted to the City Council for consideration in December 2005.

Conclusion

The CVSP will undoubtedly be one of the most ambitious and exciting planning opportunities ever undertaken in California. The goal is to create a model of sound planning and responsible growth for cities throughout the state and the country. The CVSP is a critical component of San Jose's future, and it is important that we do it right. This includes involving all the affected stakeholders and adhering to essential principles of smart growth, balanced development, and greenbelt protection. This is the right time to begin the Coyote Valley planning effort, so that when the need for growth occurs, San Jose will be ready with a plan in place to guide the creation of a unique new community based on exemplary urban design and environmental sustainability.

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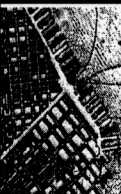
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